



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

MINUTES JANUARY 16, 2024 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS

Indian Shores Municipal Building
19305 Gulf Boulevard, 4th Floor
Indian Shores, FL 33785

WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Chair Louis Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear, Commissioner David Gardella, and Commissioner Heather Koskinas. A quorum was present with Chair Louis Snelling presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson, and Finance Director Erin Brooks were also present. Vice Chair Elizabeth “Betsey” McKenna was absent at roll call but arrived at 6:47 p.m.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

23-27 Legislative Appropriations

Fire Chief

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that he was in Tallahassee last week to meet with members of the legislature regarding the District’s appropriations request to rebuild Station 27. Chief Davidson explained the process and stated that the District’s project is in the top three projects on both the House and Senate sides, and confirmed that funding should be approved by June 2024.

23-42 Request for Proposal (RFP) #24-002 Delivery of Three (3) Fire Stations via P3

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson discussed Items #23-42 and #23-43 together. He recapped the process by which the District received an unsolicited proposal and then solicited competing bids from both P3 and design-build companies. He confirmed that no proposals were received in response to RFP #24-002 (P3) and seven (7) proposals were received in response to RFQ #24-001 (design-build). After performing an internal ranking process, the Chief stated that a list of the top three ranked firms was created. He stated that he had originally wanted to ask the Commission to

hold a special meeting to allow presentations from those top three ranked firms. He stated concerns with the design-build firms, to include all proposals being over budget, as well as the need for the District to pursue its own financing for the project. He added that he and Finance Director Brooks have been working on gathering more information on acquiring financing, which he said is a very extensive process through securing revenue bonds. He stated that he feels the fact that the P3 company brings the financing to the District is a significant benefit. He stated that his other concern is that nearly all of design-build firms were involved in litigation related to their subcontractors. Due to these reasons, he believes all of the design-build firm proposals in response to RFQ #24-001 should be rejected.

Attorney Jeff Albinson recapped the options related to selecting P3 versus design-build. Attorney Albinson shared concerns regarding the design-build firms' abilities to meet the District's budget as well as timeline restraints.

Commissioner Gardella asked which institutions have been contacted regarding financing options. Finance Director Brooks discussed her conversations with United Community Bank, but the conversations so far have been general in nature, as the District should not directly solicit financial institutions at this time without it being publicly advertised.

Commissioner Gardella inquired as to potential timeline restraints the District must adhere to. Chief Davidson stated that funding agreement for ARPA funds states that the District must operate the new Station #28 by September 30, 2026, or the unused portion of the funds must be returned to the County.

Further discussion on financing ensued. Chief Davidson reiterated the need for new, healthy fire stations as well as an emergency operations center.

Commissioner Gardella stated this is the biggest decision that will ever be made in the District as well as the most money ever spent and feels that it should not be rushed. Chief Davidson stated that he has visited some of Fortress's projects and checked references and was very impressed, but said he understands that the decision is ultimately up to the Board. Commissioner Gardella and Attorney Jeff Albinson asked questions related to ZHA, Inc.'s input, to which Chief Davidson explained that ZHA will provide information and feedback to the District but they are not able to make a recommendation.

Commissioner Gardella expressed concerns with rejecting the design-build proposals and would like to spend more time doing research. Chair Snelling stated that he agrees in part but discussed his concerns with the design-build firms related to the project potentially being delayed and the District being responsible for the associated costs over budget, whereas the P3 proposal has a maximum guaranteed cost.

Further discussion ensued and it was agreed to hold a special meeting for presentations by the top three ranked design build firms as well as the P3 firm. The meeting will be held at 5:00 p.m. on January 29, 2024 (Action Item #24-03).

**23-43 Request for Qualifications (RFQ) #24-001
Delivery of a New Fire Station via Design-Build (Station #28)**

Discussion: This item was discussed in conjunction with Discussion Item #23-42.

24-01 FL SAFE – Treasury Rates

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks explained that the majority of the District's investment funds are currently with FL SAFE PMA in an SNAV cash account that the District can draw from for operational needs. She stated that before this year, there had not been a need to discuss investing those funds in any other fixed rate account, as the District had never had the funds in the bank prior, plus market rates are now very different. She stated that in speaking with her contact at the PMA network, projections are that the SNAV rate is going down and fixed rates will be increasing over the upcoming year. She stated that no action is needed now but that she wants to start the discussion. Director Brooks explained that Board approval is currently needed for investment changes; however, these types of investment options will happen in the morning and be gone by the end of the day, so she would ask the Board to consider agreeing to certain parameters, including dollar amounts and time commitment, on what the Finance Director and Fire Chief will be allowed to authorize without Board approval.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: November 21, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings
December 19, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

**A motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2023 and December 19, 2023
Workshop and Regular Meetings.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: October, November, and December, 2023

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that the investment program is in accordance with policy at \$11.18 million held in interest earnings accounts and \$630,000 in non-interest

checking. General fund: Tax receipts through December 31, 2023 total \$6.6 million. The FEMA claim for reimbursement for Hurricane Idalia is in process. Capital projects fund: Year to date expenditures total \$169,000 for a scheduled lease payment on Squad 26, plans review table for Fire Prevention, and fire equipment to be reimbursed under the AFG grant.

A motion to approve the October, November, and December 2023 Treasurer's Report.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** None.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Jeff Albinson discussed the current EEOC matter and explained that he has been having some issues with the assigned attorney, Reynaldo Velazquez, keeping him updated on the matter. He explained that he has sent several emails over the last 90 days with no response. Attorney Albinson added that he had an issue with a previous EEOC claim in which Mr. Velazquez did not want to share a report.

[There was a break in the audio recording here. The end of the Attorney's report and beginning of the Chief's report was missed.]

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Davidson discussed the Honor Guard program that six personnel will be attending.

The Chief stated that he has recently met two times with Church of the Isles staff and stated that they will decide in February if they wish to sell the District the portion of their property. If they decide that they will, the District will then enter into negotiations.

Chief Davidson stated that the District was awarded the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant last year. He informed the Commission that this year's application will open soon and he plans to determine which priority items are needed by the District and apply again this year.

Commissioner Gardella inquired as to whether it was normal to have a wage reopener to a Collective Bargaining Agreement every year. Chief Davidson stated that is not typical but discussed the reason behind them, to include cost of living, recruitment issues due to starting salary, the need for more paramedics, and the fact that the District had not received ad valorem revenue when the CBA was originally signed and there were too many unknowns. The Chief stated that many departments are giving large, one-time increases to personnel. He explained that the wages of PSFRD firefighters have been substantially under the average, but that he did not feel

comfortable giving a large raise up front, so incremental raises have been given since the signing of the CBA. Commissioner Gardella asked what the most recent increases were; Chief Davidson stated that firefighters received 4% most recently, and 8% the year prior.

ACTION ITEMS:

23-38 Request for Proposal (RFP) #24-001 **Finance Director**
Request for Auditing Services
(Auditor Recommendation and Selection)

Discussion: Finance Director Brooks stated there were initially no responses to RFP #24-001, so the RFP was reissued and firms were directly solicited from a list provided by the Auditor General. She stated that three proposals were received in response to the reissued RFP, which the Auditor Selection Committee ranked at their last public meeting. Commissioner Koskinas, as Chair of the Auditor Selection Committee, discussed the Committee's decision. The Committee's recommendation is to enter into a contract with CS&L CPAs. Discussion ensued.

**A motion to authorize the Fire Chief to enter into a contract with
CS&L CPAs up to \$33,070.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

24-02 2024 Commission Dates **Fire Chief**
(March and August Reschedule)

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that District Administrator Kim Hampton explained that the March and August meetings will need to be rescheduled and recommendation each to take place the day after they are scheduled, but informed the Board they are free to select any dates they would like.

**A motion to reschedule the March 19, 2024 Commission meeting to March 20, 2024, and to
reschedule the August 20, 2024 Commission Meeting to August 21, 2024.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

24-03 Special Meeting – Fire Station Delivery Presentation **Fire Chief**

Discussion: This item was discussed during the Workshop as Discussion Item #23-43.


**A motion to hold a special meeting for the purpose of holding presentations from the top
three ranked design-build firms and P3 firm on January 29, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 7:46 p.m.

APPROVED:


Louis R. Snelling IV
Chair

ATTEST:


Kimberly G. Hampton
District Administrator

Feb 27, 2024
Date Approved